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SUBJECT: Halal: Keep the Knife Sharp and the Prayers Coming

¶1. (U) Summary. In a twenty-four hour stopover in Jakarta 10-11 June following participation in an APEC Avian Influenza activity in Bali, USDA Deputy Under Secretary for Regulatory and Marketing Programs Chuck Lambert made a courtesy call on senior Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) officials, and met with the USG Avian Influenza assessment team, and Indonesian Council of Ulama (MUI) officials involved in halal certification of food products for the Indonesian market. The meeting with MUI officials revealed that MUI officials participation in the USDA Cochran Program visit to halal certifying bodies in the US opened a line of communication that will support the establishment of a more transparent and workable system for certification of US food products in Indonesia. End Summary.

Call on Secretary General, MOA

¶2. A Call on Dr. Hasanuddin Ibrahim, Secretary General, MOA and a number of senior staff on 10 June provided Dr. Lambert the chance to highlight the US position regarding issues recently raised in the FAO Summit, which the Indonesian Minister of Agriculture attended. These included the US positions on the impact of biofuels production on food prices, biotechnology and export restrictions for food products and agricultural commodities. In addition, the recent agreement by the USG to accede to Japanese food aid grants or sales of Market Access Rice (MAS) stocks were also discussed. In response to the Secretary General's request for continued collaboration with USDA, he was provided with details regarding a 2002 PL 480 Agreement with the GOI in which the GOI agreed to set aside \$US 3 million for agriculturally-related Fulbright activities. The Ministry of Finance has earmarked the funds, but to date the MOA has not applied for their use, nor prepared any proposals for the program.

¶3. The Secretary General provided little detail as to MOA positions with respect to these issues, but promised to study them with his staff. The one issue that he raised was the difficulty in developing the agricultural potential of Papua, which he stated was a priority for the MOA.

The Cochran Fellows from MUI, a Window of Opportunity?

¶4. On June 11 - the Deputy Under Secretary and emboff met with two MUI officials, a staffer from the Directorate General for Livestock Services, MOA, and an official from B-POM, the GOI equivalent of the US FDA. These officials had recently returned from a USDA Cochran Fellowship Program to a number of halal certifying bodies in the US as well as a series of animal product processing establishments. All sponsored travelers were very positive on the benefits of learning more about food processing and the halal process in the US. From the discussion, it appears that the Cochran event exceeded

expectations of the Cochran Fellows and FAS/Jakarta as well. The unofficial group spokesman, a senior auditor for MUI, noted that one of his goals now is to move forward with the halal certification process, in collaboration with certifying bodies in the US, to be able to provide reasonably priced US beef for consumption by Indonesia's Muslims during the holy month of Ramadan. The team would like to see the use of a very sharp knife for animal welfare reasons, continual prayers as animals are slaughtered versus just at the beginning of a shift, and stunning that does not immediately kill the animal in question, in the US animal processing establishments.

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